

HECB FORM 1

NEW DEGREE PROGRAM PLANNING NOTICE OF INTENT (PNOI)

Program Information

Institution Name: Washington State University

Degree Title: Master of Liberal Studies

Degree Granting Unit: College of Liberal Arts
(e.g. College of Arts and Science)

Level: Masters Type: Liberal Studies Major: Liberal Studies
(e.g. Bachelor) (e.g. Science) (e.g. Chemistry)

Minor: NA (if required for major) Concentration(s): NA (if applicable)

CIP Code: 024.0101

Proposed Start Date: Fall 2006

Projected Enrollment (FTE) in Year One: 7.5 At Full Enrollment by Year: 2011 : 37.5
(# FTE) (# FTE)

Proposed New Funding: College Reallocation

Funding Source: ☐ State FTE ☐ Self Support ☒ Other -- College Reallocation

Mode of Delivery / Locations

☒ On- Campus Delivery Pullman
(enter location(s))

☐ Off-site _____
(enter location(s))

☒ Distance Learning Statewide
(enter locations, if applicable)

Substantive Statement of Demand and Need

See below

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Substantive Statement of Demand and Need

Demand for Master of Liberal Studies degrees is high throughout the country. Within the WSU Pullman campus, indicators of need and demand can be heard from non-traditional students who wish to continue their education but without the specific professional aspirations assumed of more traditional degrees and programs. Staff members, as well, have spoken of wishing to take additional coursework and “having something to show for it,” yet not wishing the constraints of a traditional degree. Hybrid delivery systems—in class and over distance—address the constraints of non-traditional students and others who must perform work full time.

The demand for multidisciplinary degrees is so clear that many universities are responding with MLS degrees like the one proposed. Although there are over 100 on-campus MLS degrees in existence throughout the nation, and although many universities are now offering other distance degrees, only a dozen universities have, so far, combined the demand for MLS degrees with distance learning (http://programs.gradschools.com/distance/liberal_studies.html). Among that dozen are the State University of New York at Stony Brook, Texas Christian University, and the University of Oklahoma. At a recent meeting of the Association of Liberal Studies Programs several participants indicated moves toward hybrid and distance formats, the most significant of those being Stanford University. WSU, as a university that has been recognized for being “most wired” and with well-established, highly-regarded undergraduate distance programs, stands poised to take a lead in what is clearly a program niche needing to be filled, a niche that is a critical part of the university’s mission to provide education specifically to all of Washington’s citizens, but also to people beyond the state’s borders. With no other in-state institution offering this degree, Washington residents will not have a reasonably priced option for a degree that is increasingly in demand among non-traditional students.

This need has been reflected in two surveys conducted by students in marketing classes under the supervision of Professor Donald Stem. The first of these, conducted in 2000, was preliminary and more generic, identifying a need for an interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary graduate degree. The sample for that study (N = 5000) showed a high level of interest in such a program. The second study, conducted in 2004, was tailored specifically for a Master of Liberal Studies to be housed in the College of Liberal Arts. The second survey was sent to 4,980 graduates of DDP, CLA, College of Education, and the ROTC program using a stratified random survey approach. The results of the survey produced a 95% confidence level.

- 76.2% of those returning surveys indicated that they were either interested or very interested in pursuing a Master’s degree.
- 78.1% stated that they were either comfortable or very comfortable with pursuing such a degree through distance learning.
- The reasons indicated by those responding positively included that they would pursue an advanced degree for career advancement (34.1%), salary increases (20.4%), promotion (6.2%), or for personal development (30.6%).

That is, a large proportion of respondents indicated interest in precisely the kind of degree being proposed: one intended for those already in careers wishing advancement within those careers or wishing to further their education without respect to entering a new profession.